

The Vines in 2002
(Craig Nicholls, second
from left): 'A whiff of
demented rebellion.'

JAMIE BEEDON



THE VINES

The Best Of The Vines

★★★★★ Q RECOMMENDS

AUSTRALIA'S NIRVANA. TROUBLED FRONTMAN INCLUDED.

The Vines' arrival in 2002 was perfectly timed. After a fallow period, rock had been revitalised the previous year by The Strokes and the theatrical oomph of The White Stripes. As 2002 dawned, New York buzzed about the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, while London's charismatic The Libertines released their first single. Then, in July, The Vines appeared from Sydney with a debut album, *Highly Evolved*, that appeared capable of topping the lot. Fronted by unpredictable live wire Craig Nicholls, The Vines twinned Nicholls's two musical obsessions, Nirvana and The Beatles, delivering them with their own furious verve.

Highly Evolved sold 1.5 million copies worldwide, an aura of danger tracking the band everywhere as Nicholls smashed up instruments, dressing rooms and, occasionally, bandmates, while seemingly existing on a diet of McDonald's and marijuana. It made for a great spectacle and even better copy: behold the new Kurt Cobain, minus the suicidal tendencies. What could go wrong?

Doctors who specialise in Asperger's Syndrome – a disorder related to autism – recommend that sufferers eat well, sleep in the same bed and follow a stress-free diary. They should not tour the world with a chaotic rock band. During a long 2004 tour in support of a critically panned second album, *Winning Days*, Nicholls attacked a

photographer in Sydney. It was announced that he'd been diagnosed with Asperger's and that The Vines would cease touring. Bassist Patrick Matthews quit and all their promises circled down the drain.

Yet they returned as a trio in 2006 with *Vision Valley*, an album full of the sharp grunge-pop they'd made their name with. It didn't kick any commercial doors in, but it signalled the rebirth of a smart songwriter in Nicholls, as well as producing a happy coda to a depressing tale.

The real shame, however, is that this *Best Of* sounds more like a *Greatest Hits*. Unbelievably, they never had a real hit single: the lurching violence of *Get Free*, *Highly Evolved* and *Outtathaway*, with their whiff of demented youthful rebellion and stomping choruses, deserve to be cemented next to *Smells Like Teen Spirit* on any rock radio playlist, while the pastoral psychedelia of *Spaceship* would do generations of bong parties proud. Instead, The Vines are now settled as a cult act, having recently completed work on a fourth album. But, sometimes, they too must curse that they weren't more than contenders. ■ TED KESSLER

INFO

DOWNLOAD:

Get Free

Highly Evolved

Don't Listen To The Radio Ride

Autumn Shade
Outtathaway

EXTRAS:

Bonus new track, 4Eva

LABEL: Heavenly

RELEASE DATE:

5 May

FURTHER INFO:

www.thevines.com



NIRVANA

Nevermind [Geffen, 1991] ★★★★★

Anguished heavy rock has rarely sounded so life-affirming and melodic. In Sydney, Craig Nicholls was rapt with attention.